

Non-Proliferation Talks Fail over Mideast Nuclear-Weapons Free Zone Plan

United States, Canada and Britain Opposed a Plan to Set Up a Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone in the Middle East

By [Global Research News](#)

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Nuclear non-proliferation talks ended without agreement on Friday after the United States, Canada and Britain opposed a plan to set up a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East.

More than 150 countries took part in a month-long conference reviewing the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which seeks to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and technology.

But talks on a final document outlining an action plan for the next five years hit a wall over a provision on convening a conference by March 2016 on creating a Middle East nuclear-weapons free zone.

Israel, which is not a member of the NPT but attended the conference as an observer, opposed the proposal backed by Egypt and Arab countries.

Israel is believed to be the only country that possesses a nuclear arsenal in the region, although it has never acknowledged its nuclear military capacity.

US Arms Control Under Secretary Rose Gottemoeller told the NPT conference that provisions on holding the conference were “incompatible with our long-standing policies”.

Gottemoeller argued that the proposed nuclear-free zone did not stand a chance of success “absent the consent of all states involved”, a clear reference to Israel’s opposition.

Earlier this week, the US administration had dispatched an envoy to Israel to discuss the proposal, hoping to reach a compromise that would have salvaged the final document of the NPT conference.

US blames Egypt

Gottemoeller took aim at “a number of states, in particular Egypt” for the failure of the talks, accusing them of refusing to “let go of unrealistic and unworkable conditions” to create the nuclear weapons-free zone.

The head of the British delegation to the talks, Matthew Rowland, also said the terms for convening the conference on the nuclear weapons-free zone were “a stumbling block for us”.

Canada said it could not agree to the document because of the provisions that would have laid the groundwork for creating the zone banning all nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

In an eleventh-hour move, Iran, which heads the Non-Aligned Movement, requested more time to consider the final document but the session resumed with no agreement.

Iran's envoy cited the refusal of "three delegations" to agree to the final text, accusing them of blocking the consensus "with this high cost".

The envoy said this was "only to safeguard the interest of a particular non-party to the treaty that has endangered peace and security in the region by developing a nuclear capability".

At the last NPT conference in 2010, a final document called for the conference on the nuclear-free weapons zone for the Middle East to be held in 2012, but that meeting never materialised.

The NPT, which entered into force in 1970, has 190 state-parties or entities that meet every five years to take stock of progress in nuclear disarmament.

The treaty is seen as a grand bargain between the five nuclear powers and non-nuclear states which agreed to give up atomic weapon ambitions in exchange for disarmament pledges.

But non-nuclear states have been increasingly frustrated by the slow pace of disarmament and had sought during the month-long conference to press for action to speed up the reduction of stockpiles.

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